



up front

autumn / winter 2017

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**WAR ON
WANT**

FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

WELCOME



The UK is at a pivotal moment as we redefine our relationships with Europe and the rest of the world. We must ensure

that our priorities for UK policy, both domestic and foreign, put people over profit. In this edition, read about the challenges we face as we negotiate trade, worker's rights, and social justice throughout Brexit. We also introduce you to the next phase in our Stop Arming Israel campaign, calling on HSBC to end their complicity in Israel's violations of international law. Read too about the fight for labour rights in Sri Lanka, the struggles and resistance to extractivism in Tunisia, and Colombia's win for people power.

Solidarity,

Asad Rehman
Executive Director



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Brexit: The challenges we face

As War on Want's new Executive Director I'm excited to be right at the front line with an organisation that is best placed to fight for justice and equality in the face of major challenges.



A surprise General Election in June brought with it a chance for us to advocate our core values of justice and equality. Our new political landscape means we have the opportunity to put forward real solutions to big questions and demand a more transparent and democratically accountable process.

With Brexit becoming the defining political agenda for the foreseeable future, the UK is at a pivotal moment: in terms of exiting the European Union, re-defining its relationship with Europe and with the rest of the world, and determining the priorities for UK policy, both domestic and foreign, in the coming years. We will face political negotiations and decisions that will define policies on: immigration; incorporating EU human rights protections; measures to protect workers' rights; approaches to regulation, especially in terms of climate/environmental, health and food standards; and, crucially, our relationship with the people and countries in the global South.

For years, War on Want's political analysis and forward thinking has marked us out as a strong and independent voice in the movement for global justice. Our partnerships with social movements and trade unions around the world ensure that our strategic interventions are grounded in the realities and experiences of those most impacted and those at the forefront of fighting for a better future. Our unique organisational strength is being able to link that voice for global justice to the struggle for social justice at home and propose radical solutions led by those voices. We have

campaigned together against austerity; we actively supported the development of the food sovereignty movement in the UK and across Europe, alongside the crucial work led by social movements in the global South; we continue to run key campaigns on economic justice including on workers' rights, with a particular focus on migrant workers, as well as the impact on those forced to work on precarious contracts, a race to the bottom when it comes to employment rights that affect us all.

Our work over the years has never been more relevant and vital as it is now. We must seize this moment to fight for our democracy and ensure the UK parliament can play its role in framing and scrutinising proposals regarding Brexit, trade, human rights including workers' rights, and broader social justice issues. We are in a complex and fast-paced policy environment where the UK legislative agenda, in particular the proposed Repeal Bill and Trade Bill, must be a priority for our policy, advocacy and campaigning work for the coming years.

We will be calling on our supporters and activists to play a pivotal part in fighting for policies and legislation that anchor the highest standards of transparency and accountability, human rights, workers' rights, and health, food and climate/environmental standards for the future. There are many new exciting opportunities to make a difference in this fight. I can promise you that by working together – we can and will win.





HSBC's complicity in Israel's violations of Palestinian rights

Three years ago, Israel launched a full-scale military attack on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. After 50 horrendous days, more than 2,250 Palestinians had been killed and half a million displaced. The attacks involved strikes from air and sea, and extensive use of artillery and ground incursions by Israeli armed forces.

Now, years later, tens of thousands in Gaza remain displaced, wounded, physically and psychologically scarred. The already devastating poverty and insecurity in the Gaza Strip has increased, with over 70 percent of the population at risk of illness due to water contamination and 80 percent relying on food aid. All two million residents suffer from chronic electricity shortages, with current rates at as little as four hours of power a day.

This poverty and insecurity is a direct result of the blockade on the Strip, considered by the UN to be collective punishment, a war crime under international law. The blockade is enforced by the Israeli military with gunboats off the coast, a wall with watchtowers and remote-controlled sniper guns, and scores of armed and surveillance drones.

While Palestinians struggle for survival, arms companies are making a killing.

What these weapons do

Companies such as BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon produce and export weapons to Israel used in daily violence against Palestinians. These weapons are used at armed checkpoints, restricting Palestinian movement in the West Bank. They are used in the targeting of fisherfolk in Gaza, shot if their boats stray beyond the narrow restricted fishing zone, as happened to Mohammed Bakr, killed by the Israeli navy in May 2017.

They arm the snipers taking shots at unarmed protesters, often resulting in injury or death, as was the case with Baraa Hamamda, a teen killed by Israeli soldiers who stormed his refugee camp early Friday morning. They provide tear gas grenade launchers, showering West Bank villages with toxic gas, sometimes causing deaths, like the 18-month-old baby Abdul Rahman Barghouti who died when Israeli tear gas canisters flew into his house.

This violence is only possible because of Israel's trade in deadly arms with countries and companies around the world. Some of the UK's biggest banks and financial institutions are invested in and loan funds to the companies selling weapons and military technology to Israel. Banks and financial institutions are a crucial link in the chain of Palestinian oppression.

Excuses, excuses

War on Want's new report, "Deadly Investments", exposes the business relationships between UK banks and financial institutions, and companies known to supply Israel with weapons and technology used in the oppression of Palestinians.

Some banks and financial institutions maintain these business relationships despite stated commitments to human rights. HSBC, for example, has a Defence Policy, which states that it has been progressively withdrawing from arms trade investments since 2000. However, we found HSBC listed as a shareholder in all 19 arms companies we looked at, with investments totalling more than \$1bn.

HSBC has told us that its shares in arms companies are usually held on behalf of clients. But HSBC refused to categorically state that it does not directly hold shares, and its use of the term "usually" suggests that it does. Even when it comes to holdings on behalf of clients, HSBC still benefits from the transactions being able to freely hold those shares on behalf of clients, while claiming that it has no moral responsibility otherwise. **These excuses don't hold up to scrutiny.**

This June, the Office of the UN High Commission on Human Rights issued guidance clarifying the obligations that banks have in respect of human rights under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The document makes clear that banks' business relationships with human rights abusing companies make them complicit.

The steps HSBC and others need to take are clear: end their business relationships immediately with companies selling weapons and military technology to Israel and any other regime committing systematic violations of international law.

Divest once and for all

While ultimately it is the Israeli government that must be held to account over its violations of Palestinian rights, it can continue to shirk responsibility so long as governments and companies around the world continue to lend material support to commit its crimes.

HSBC, with branches on our high streets, put in place its defence policy because of popular pressure and campaigns to end bank complicity in the arms trade. So we have our work cut out for us too: to push HSBC to take seriously its stated commitment to human rights and a safer world, and divest from the arms trade once and for all.

***A version of this article appeared in Middle East Eye on 19 July 2017*



Find out more: waronwant.org/stop-arming-israel





“Toothless” Taylor Review: time to end precarious contracts

The government’s review into “modern forms of employment,” called the Taylor Review, had promised to tackle precarious work, including the bogus self-employment found in the so-called gig economy. However, it has failed to address the key issue: that with precarious contracts, employers hold all the power, whilst the workers hold none – unable to claim even the most basic rights at work.

In response, War on Want supporters have been writing thousands of emails to their MPs to demand the government act to ensure workers have basic protections in their employment.

Precarious contracts mean workers face the constant threat of losing future work, as well as having to make

themselves available with no guarantee of hours, and pay. Employers are given the power to withdraw workers’ livelihoods without accountability. Faced with this imbalance of power, workers are less able to challenge abuse.

Women, migrants and workers from communities of colour are more likely to be on precarious contracts. This means they face greater obstacles to challenging discrimination and suffer the worst terms of employment. This reinforces structural discrimination in the labour market.

There is nothing modern about exploitation: it’s time to End Precarious Contracts.

Take action here: waronwant.org/ask-your-mp-end-precarious-contracts

Fighting for transparent and democratic trade deals after Brexit

With Brexit negotiations now underway and trade talks with the EU scheduled to start imminently, trade is once again at the top of the political agenda. As ever, War on Want is working with allies in the UK and across Europe to ensure that whatever settlement we achieve with the EU, it will be focussed on the needs of people over big business.

But while an EU trade deal is a priority, the government now has ‘working groups’ targeting priority countries for UK trade deals. In line with this, we’ve seen Prime Minister Theresa May visit arms export destination Saudi Arabia and fail to speak out on its devastating

bombing of Yemen. Liam Fox praised shared values with Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines against a backdrop of the extrajudicial killings of some 7,000 people. In trips to the USA, May refused to rule out the NHS from a deal with Trump, and Liam Fox highlighted his desire to put chlorine-washed chickens on our plates.

With such a worrying agenda, we’ve decided to focus our latest trade campaign on the urgent need for the UK to establish laws ensuring transparency and democracy in UK trade deals. You can order copies of our new briefing, and take action through our website to ask your MP to support Early Day Motion 128 on the issue.

Read the new briefing here: waronwant.org/resources/transparency-democracy

Struggles and resistance to extractivism in Tunisia

More than six years after the start of the revolutionary process in Tunisia, unrest, disenchantment and disillusionment pervades. Social mobilisations, protests, protracted sit-ins and occupations are multiplying, reflecting the ongoing resistance of the Tunisian people to the oppressive economic and political structures that led them to revolt in the first place.

People are asking what happened to the promises of the 2011 revolution and the demands for social justice. Away from the tourist areas, ordinary Tunisians face unemployment, poverty, corruption and everyday injustices. Meanwhile nearby great natural resource wealth is being extracted by big international corporations. The state's failure and incapacity to solve these issues is the result of a reckless insistence on applying the same recipe for disaster, and is one aspect of the neoliberal violence being relentlessly visited on Tunisians. This is facilitated by domestic ruling elites that are subservient to the interests of Western powers, International Financial Institutions and multinationals.

Protests have also been targeting the fossil fuel and mining industries, sometimes halting production. Despite a new article in the Tunisian constitution stipulating state sovereignty over natural resources, oil and gas companies continue to garner obscene profits and enjoy impunity, while local communities continue to shoulder the burden of the social and environmental impacts of this industry: disease, pollution, environmental destruction, displacement, and unemployment. It is in this context that protests such as the ones in the Gafsa mining basin (2008, 2015), the coastal oasis of Gabes, the archipelago of Kerkennah (spring 2016) and the more recent protest camps in Tataouine, southern Tunisia arise.

Talking about their demands, one protestor in Tataouine said: "Sure, employment, that's our first demand. And our second demand is that the resources that have been stolen be returned to the country, that natural wealth be returned to the country whatever the region, whether Tataouine, Zarzis, Gafsa or anywhere else..."

The development model imposed on Tunisian people (as well as on others in the region) is an extractivist model, which has been a mechanism of colonial and neo-colonial plunder and appropriation. Extractivism refers to those activities that overexploit natural resources, destined for export to the world markets, and is not limited to minerals or oil. It is also present in farming, forestry, fishing, and even tourism with its intensive water use.

Our partners in Tunisia do amazing work to counteract the negative effects of the extractive industries and to fight for popular sovereignty over natural resources. For instance, the Tunisian Observatory on the Economy is documenting the political, economic, social and environmental impacts of the shale industry in Douz, southern Tunisia where the British company Perenco is involved. In a country that suffers a severe water stress, their work with communities to stop the water-intensive shale industry is even more important and definitely needs support.

More information on our work in this region can be found here: waronwant.org/NAWA



SRI LANKA: FIGHTING FOR LABOUR RIGHTS

War on Want union partner, FTZ&GSEU has been at the forefront of the struggle within Sri Lanka to push for the right to organise and for workers within the free trade zones to have access to unions.

The EU recently granted Sri Lanka a 'preferential' trade concession – called GSP+ – that was taken away seven years ago in response to the human rights abuses against the Tamil minority during the civil war. GSP+ reduces the duty paid on imports to the EU from countries such as Pakistan and Bolivia. GSP+ links the removal of export tariffs with core human rights and labour standards. This agreement primarily affects the garment industry, which constitutes the majority of Sri Lanka's exports to the EU.

Apparel giants like H&M, Zara and Adidas all have their homes in the EU, and Sri Lanka regaining GSP+ status represents a significant bonus for these factory owners. But not for the garment workers. While increased profits will flow to the industry, Sri Lanka's 300,000 workers will receive no benefit, continuing to work up to 16 hours a day for wages which don't cover basic living costs.

Anton Marcus, of FTZ&GSEU points out that when Sri Lanka previously had GSP+ status, workers saw no gains, despite being the ones driving profits: "The EU says Sri Lanka meets labour and human rights standards but core International Labour Organization conventions aren't implemented at all through legislation, let alone practice."

The inadvertent result of the EU offering an agreement that gives the stamp of approval to labour rights is to whitewash the systemic nature of rights abuses and undermine local efforts to fight for change.

Within this fraught context, FTZ&GSEU and War on Want have advocated for the EU to listen to the voices of workers, recognise the reality of labour rights, and ensure that workers benefit rather than lose out on GSP+ this time around. To this end, FTZ&GSEU have pushed forward a policy roadmap to ensure labour rights can be practically achieved for factory workers. The current focus is on ensuring that workers can benefit financially. They have ensured an additional visit from the formal delegation from the EU later this year to put forward research findings on how this could be practically implemented.



© FTZ&GSEU



Appealing to the EU for benefits for workers through GSP+ risks losing sight of the root causes of the unequal international division of labour that reinforces neo-colonial trade relationships. Entrenched exploitation of factory workers in the global South is embedded in the supply chains of fashion industries by design. It is the fashion brands that can control the style of clothes to the last stitch, but plead ignorance for how to ensure basic labour rights in the same factories. In a system where the only goal is maximising profits for a few, someone must lose - and it's always the garment workers.

The corporate impunity enjoyed by fashion brands is also not incidental – the EU has done little to commit to ensuring they comply with basic human rights due diligence. The EU is instrumental in driving the privatisation of services in the global South through development assistance, trade and investment. As an institution the EU aggressively pushes a ‘free trade’ agenda, while ignoring Southern countries who attempt to protect vulnerable local industries from overwhelming competition from multinational corporations. All the while, the EU and global North freely practice protectionism to ensure that trade in goods and services happen on their terms.

The question then becomes, what are the implications of the EU presenting itself in support of workers’ rights through conditional trade mechanisms like GSP+ when little is done to address the cause – big business free to profit from exploitation while domiciled in the EU. To seriously address a mode of production that exploits labour of the global South for the benefit of the North necessitates a complete

overhaul of the current system of international trade as an inherently neo-colonial intervention that sustains the plunder of resources and labour from the global South.

“The EU says Sri Lanka meets labour and human rights standards but core International Labour Organization conventions aren’t implemented at all through legislation, let alone practice.”

Anton Marcus, FTZ&GSEU

Countries and corporations of the global North are afforded the position of directly benefiting from an unequal system of trade that oppresses the global South while also imposing conditions that frame the neo-colonial process not just as neutral, but as actively in service of human and labour rights.

Until we can accept the inherently neo-colonial nature of the global system of trade and finance and its direct impact on manufacturing industry, we will be stuck strategizing about how the crumbs of capital can be divided among factory workers in the global South, while the countries of the global North celebrate both their spoils and supremacy.

Read more: waronwant.org/workers-rights

From Balfour to BDS: 100 years of British complicity in the oppression of Palestinians

● This November marks a century since the Balfour Declaration through which the British government extended its support to the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, at the expense of the rights of the native Palestinians to self-determination.

The consequences of the colonisation of Palestine have been devastating for Palestinians. The UK continues to play an active role in this oppression. The arms trade is a prime example; the UK

government approves hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of arms exports to Israel every year, used in violent attacks on Palestinians.

The Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement gives us a set of historically tried and tested tactics to end British support for Israel's aggression. This year we must say a century of British complicity is a century too long.

Find out more at: waronwant.org/BDS

Campaign victory: High court rules in favour of protecting local democracy

● In June 2017, the High Court ruled that the government cannot block local councils from divesting from companies complicit in human rights abuses. Our friends at the Palestine Solidarity Campaign filed a judicial review that challenged the UK government's pension investment regulations first introduced in November 2015. War on Want submitted witness statements in support.

The court case followed a public campaign led by War on Want and other allies, mobilising over 23,000 people to write to the government rejecting the anti-democratic plan.

Citizens have a right and a responsibility to press for local councils to end their investments with companies complicit in human rights abuse. This court victory affirms that right, and work is already underway on a new wave of local council divestment campaigns.

waronwant.org/justice-palestine

Colombia: A win for people power



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● After years of state neglect, the people of Buenaventura in the Colombian Pacific region took to the streets to demand peace and dignity. Following three weeks of intense civic strike and non-stop negotiations in the face of grave violence from state actors, they emerged victorious.

Strike organisers – including War on Want's partner, the Process of Black Communities (PCN) reached an agreement with the Colombian government, which they hope will address the centuries of exclusion of Afro-Colombian people in order to safeguard the environment and the rights of communities to water and life.

More information: waronwant.org/media/colombia-win-people-power

Struggling for justice in South Africa



© Abahlali base Mjondolo

● Close to ten thousand shack dwellers and people living in informal housing took to the streets of Durban to protest against the violence inflicted on them during evictions. The protest highlighted the violence of the neoliberal economic system operating in South Africa that is seeing more people plunged into poverty, with the number of households living in shack settlements sitting now at 2.19 million.

City representatives refused to meet the protesters to accept their list of demands. War on Want partner, Abahlali base Mjondolo, turned to the courts to get an interdict against the violence – and was successful. The City has been restrained from demolishing, burning or destroying Abahlali housing structures. War on Want will continue to stand with our partner, shining a light on their power and their fight so that they will never be made invisible.

Find out more: waronwant.org/global-partnerships

Demanding justice from UK mining company

● On the 5th anniversary of the Marikana Mining Massacre, War on Want hosted Primrose Sonti and Thumeka Magwangqana from women's movement, Sikhala Sonke ("We Cry Together") based in Marikana. They brought their fight against Lonmin, a British mining company, to London where they demanded that the company meet its legal obligations to build social housing and provide decent living and working conditions for the miners and their families. They also demanded Lonmin apologise publicly for the killing of 34 striking miners and pay compensation to the families of the dead miners.

A series of public film screenings of Sikhala Sonke's documentary, *Strike a Rock*, were screened in Sheffield and London, and protests held outside Lonmin and the South African Embassy. This visit was an important step in the global support and profile for both this grassroots women's group and against violent corporate extractivism.

For more information, please visit: waronwant.org/marikana



North African Network for Food Sovereignty launched

● In July 2017, anti-capitalist organisations and activists from North Africa met in Tunis to set up the North African Network for Food Sovereignty, which strives to be a unifying structure for struggles in North Africa and will be involved in local, continental and international mobilisations.

The participating organisations noted in the Network's charter that the region's food sovereignty has been undermined for decades. This process started in the colonial period and is being reinforced by neo-colonial and extractivist policies implemented in the name of development.

To address this the network "will fight for the establishment of a new system that will end human exploitation and the destruction of life while satisfying people's needs in a participatory and democratic framework."

More information: waronwant.org/media/north-african-food-sovereignty-network-launched



